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SOME ASPECTS OF THE INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL PROBLEMS AND IDEAS UPON THE STUDY AND WRITING OF HISTORY¹

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History is so susceptible to every kind of influence that it is more difficult to define even than sociology. I shall not attempt to define it, further than to say that it is concerned with the life of man in the past. But the life of man in the past is an immense subject, and even with our limited sources of information it is quite impossible to fix the attention upon everything that man has done in the past. The historian has therefore to select, to devote himself to what interests him in the past, to emphasize those aspects of the past which he deems important. Undoubtedly one historian will differ from another in this respect. But in spite of individual differences, the historians of any age are likely to find those aspects of the past interesting or important which are in some way connected with the intellectual or social conditions of the age in which they live; so that the historical work that is most characteristic of any time may be regarded as embodying an interpretation of the past in terms of present social interests.

This manner of defining the function of history finds some support in the current trend of scientific thought. The latest fashion among psychologists and philosophers seems to be to regard the individual intelligence, not as an instrument suited to furnish an absolute test of objective truth, but rather as a tool pragmatically useful in enabling the individual to find his way about in a disordered objective world. In like manner, one may conveniently regard the general intellectual activity of any period—the common ideas and beliefs, the prepossessions and points of view—as having had its origin in practical interests, and as deriving its validity from the service it renders in solving the problems

¹ From Proceedings of the American Sociological Society.

that grow out of community life. Historical thinking is part of this intellectual activity, and like philosophy and science, literature or theology, it is a social instrument, helpful in getting the world's work more effectively done.

And if we turn to the history of history, we find always a pretty close connection between the characteristic historical work of any period and the fundamental prepossessions of the time in which it falls. In the Middle Ages, the study of the past reflected the religious and ecclesiastical interests of that age. Protestant and Catholic historians of the sixteenth century found interesting and important those aspects of the past which threw light on the theological and political quarrels of the Reformation. In the eighteenth century, Monarchy and Church found a certain justification in the *Acta Sanctorum* and the great documentary collections of the benedictines; while the practical value of charters inspired the work of Mabillon, who founded the science of diplomatics. But in the latter part of the century, when social needs ran counter to established authority, the reformers turned again to the past and found there arguments suited to revolution.

It is characteristic of every age to think that "we are the people"; and in our own day historians, with justifiable pride in their achievements, have sometimes supposed that a method of studying history has at last been discovered which owes nothing to time or place; a scientific method, which enables us to study the past definitively, if only it is applied in a thoroughgoing manner. But this attitude is less common today than it was fifteen or twenty years ago; and perhaps it is possible even now to indicate, in a general way, how the study and writing of history during the last half-century has been determined by the pressure of social problems and ideals.

I

The period from 1815 to about 1850 was one of immense activity in the study and writing of history; and the inspiration and determining influence of much of this work was the French Revolution and the problems it left unsettled. To the generation after 1815, it seemed, indeed, that all questions were unsettled; and as the disillusioned found refuge from the present in an ideal Middle Age,

or in the world of dreams, so philosophers and statesmen and politicians and historians, who were often politicians if not statesmen, turned to the past to rediscover the principles of ordered social life.

Of the questions which the Revolution left unsettled, perhaps the most pressing was political in its nature. In France and Germany, if not also in England, the Revolution destroyed all consensus of opinion as to the fundamental principles of government and public law. For two generations party divisions turned on this issue; and we might expect to find, as we do in fact find, that historians and statesmen, when they turned to the past, were primarily interested in its political and legal aspects: they wanted the past to tell them what law really was after all, and what kind of government would prove most stable. It was therefore an age of political historians, and each political party—Absolutist, Doctrinaire-Liberal, Historic-Rights, Whig, Republican, Radical—found support in history for its practical program.

But undoubtedly the strong trend of the period, in practical politics and in educated opinion, at least until about 1840, was toward moderation and compromise. The golden mean was found an excellent substitute for theories pressed to their logical conclusion. Few could deny, after 1815, that institutions are bound to change; and although Joseph De Maistre thought that the Revolution was an evidence of God's wrath which could be appeased only by a return to the Old Régime, even Louis XVIII, who had learned something, however little he had forgotten, knew that this was impossible. On the other hand, few were ready to maintain that the Revolution had ushered in that golden age which the philosophers dreamed of. To find the middle way between reaction and change, to reconcile liberty and authority—to "nationalize royalty and to royalize France," as Decazes formulated the problem—was therefore a principal motive.

And historians, for the most part, reflect this practical motive; even French historians, balancing the evils of the Revolution against its benefits; hitting upon this or that aspect of the Revolution as *the* Revolution, and regarding all else as a betrayal of it. The favorite method, among French historians, of reconciling liberty

and authority was embodied in the theory of the Frankish conquest, put into classical form by Augustin Thierry, and to be found in nearly every history written in France before 1830; a theory which appealed to the anti-Teutonic sentiment of the time, and yet justified both the Revolution and the Restoration; for the Revolution did well, according to this theory, in abolishing class distinctions which the meddling Germans had established in the fifth century, but it did ill in substituting for the historic monarchy borrowed republican institutions so unsuited to the kindly nature of Jacques Bonhomme.

In Germany, an even more effective "remedy for the eighteenth century and the malady of vain speculation" was discovered. To bind past and present in indissoluble union by grafting new institutions on old custom was the program of the moderate party; and German jurists and historians furnished a complete justification for this policy in the doctrine of historical continuity. Having no faith in the revolutionary doctrine of natural law and abstract rights, they searched for evidence of such law and rights precisely where it could by no means be found, that is to say, in history; and in history they found, providentially, no natural rights, but only historic rights; right, indeed, they identified with fact, and conceived of true progress in terms of race experience; an experience registered in that predestined succession of events which could never be either greatly accelerated or permanently retarded by conscious effort. This idea, applied to law by Savigny, and to politics by Ranke and his disciples, was the strongest bulwark of that generation against the opposite dangers of revolution and reaction. Jurist and historian, employing critical methods of research which could not be questioned, and basing their conclusions upon the most exhaustive investigation, united in announcing that the French Revolution was a necessary mistake—an event which had done a certain amount of good undoubtedly, but which, by virtue of having departed from approved German precedents, had done it in a very bad manner.

This conception of history found support in the prevailing idealism, which furnished just those basic principles that were necessary to a complete philosophy. For although history was

regarded as a necessary and gradual process, it was not, in the main, regarded as a natural process; not conceived as the result of forces inherent in society, but rather as the expression of God's will, or of the beneficent primal force, clearly manifested in some particular form—in the Church, according to De Maistre; in the State, according to the loyal supporters of the Prussian monarchy; in great men, according to Carlyle; in certain transcendent ideas, according to Ranke and Michelet. It was, therefore, quite legitimate to deal with history as St. Augustine and Bossuet had dealt with it, that is to say, representatively; to select, out of all the past, particular activities, such as political activities, or the acts of heroes, as summing up the whole of history's meaning; or, rather, as revealing that meaning progressively; for history was to be understood, also, as the realization of the "one increasing purpose," leading up to certain desired ends—to the Reform bill or the July Monarchy, to the mystical Liberty of Michelet or the Fraternity of Louis Blanc, to the blessings of American federal democracy, to the fostering care of the Hohenzollerns. The quintessence of the historical thinking of the age is in Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, in which the whole life of humanity is seen to be but the projection in time of the Absolute Idea, the *Weltgeist*, "whose works are always good and whose latest work is best."

II

Of the influences which contributed, during the third quarter of the century, to enlarged conception of the content of history, the work of the earlier sociologists was one. Toward the middle of the century, von Mohl and von Stein in Germany, Comte in France, and Spencer in England were defining "society" as something distinct from the state, and fundamental to it. The idea was at least as old as Harrington, but the discoveries of natural science gave it a new significance. Spencer, applying the biological analogy, conceived of society as an organism, in its origin and development conditioned by forces that were inherent, and capable of a purely natural explanation; of which the corollary was that great men, ideas, institutions—the state being one, and perhaps not the most important—were only the particular mani-

festations of history and not its substance. It is true that historians were not then, or ever after, carried away with the notion that society is an organism; but they found it increasingly difficult to maintain, in the old manner, that the sum and substance of history is past politics. Treitschke was in fact defending the doctrine against Lorenz von Stein in Germany before it was officially declared in England, and Freeman's famous epigram was already something of an anachronism when it was adopted as the motto of the *Johns Hopkins Studies*.

Practical conditions, however, had probably more to do with enriching the historian's conception of the content of history than speculative thought; and of these practical conditions, perhaps the most important was the growing complexity of social problems for which the older liberalism furnished no solution. Classical economists and liberal statesmen had hoped that if the state guaranteed individual freedom, of which free contract was an essential element, all would be well. "With the ever-greater realization of this principle," said Gavour, "there must follow a greater welfare for all, but especially for the least favored classes." But it was not to be. Even a "calico millennium," upon which Carlyle poured the vials of his wrath, was not ushered in. Free competition meant free exploitation. Chattel slavery might be abolished in the West Indies, but the existence of wage slavery at Manchester made it clear that the state had something more to do at home than to guarantee free contract. In England, indeed, the factory legislation antedated the free-trade budget; and in every country, from the middle of the century, problems of government became increasingly economic and social in their nature. Even the political historian, therefore, seeing with his own eyes how much industrial conditions had to do with present politics, could with difficulty avoid the conclusion that they might have had something to do with past politics as well.

The economists themselves proved to the historian that this was so. John Stuart Mill, the greatest of the classical school, pointed out the weakness of the *laissez-faire* theory. According to some, the remedy for false theory was more theory, and they

labored to found the new science of sociology. Others felt that less theory was the thing. Roscher, borrowing his method from history, founded the school of economic historians, whose fruitful researches made it clear, to them at least, that political history and the fate of governments were mainly determined by the material interests. The theory of the *Economic Interpretation of History* followed in due time. Without committing themselves to the theory, historians admitted, willingly enough, the importance of the results of economic research for the understanding of history.

The economists were not alone in borrowing the historical method. Everyone borrowed it. Disciples inspired by the enthusiasm of Jacob Grimm traced the history of language. Scherer and Sainte-Beuve, renouncing dogmatic canons, interpreted literature as the product of time and place. Baur and the Tübingen school of theology applied the principle of relativity to dogma. The great Hegel himself distilled the acid which dissolved his own absolutism; and philosophers who could not follow Schopenhauer into pessimism turned themselves into historians and wrote histories of philosophy instead of philosophies of history. What, then, was to become of history proper, every part of the past having been appropriated by some special discipline? In those days, many were favorably impressed with the splendid paradox of Seeley, that since everything was history there was no need of historians. But historians themselves, instead of surrendering their subject, enlarged it. Since every aspect of life and thought can be so profitably studied in the light of its past, it must be, they said, that every aspect of a people's past contributes to its history.

And after all, this conclusion was of undoubted orthodoxy. For Savigny had conceived of law as the expression of the whole life of a people, something to be discovered by jurists rather than imposed by statesmen. If so, then it was natural to suppose that the state, which declared the law, must itself be the product of the national life. But the logic of events was needed to prove this corollary. It was characteristic of the earlier liberalism to make a fetish of constitutions, to think of liberty as a recorded

definition rather than as a living fact.¹ The spirit of the generation of 1830 is revealed in Guizot, with solemn confidence battering down explosive social forces under a revised charter; in Macaulay, resting the edifice of human happiness upon the fragile foundation of a reform bill; in Webster and Calhoun, regarding the Union as the product of the Constitution, a union created by definition, existing, one might suppose, mainly for dialectical purposes. But the events of 1848 and after made it clear that the life of nations could not be run in the rigid mold of written law or formulated custom. Bismarck, Cavour, and Lincoln all held to a higher law than constitutions or resolutions of parliaments. This higher law, which determined states and constitutions, was seen to be the nation itself. The unification of Germany, Italy, and the United States, by triumphantly demonstrating the reality of national sentiment, made it difficult to deny that a state as John Richard Green said, "is accidental, it can be made or unmade; but a nation is something real which can be neither made nor destroyed."²

These conditions, which it has seemed worth while to present in a single view, were doubtless only the more general and obvious influences which have contributed during the last half-century to enlarge the historian's conception of the content of history. In this respect, their effects were not, it need hardly be said, precisely the same everywhere, or everywhere felt at the same time. The earliest marked revival of interest in what may be called culture history was in Germany, during the two decades after 1850—a revival mainly inspired by the social ferment of the revolutionary movement, but partly also by interest in classical studies. German enthusiasm for classical antiquity, especially on its aesthetic side, which dates from Winckelmann, and was so immensely stimulated by Goethe, led naturally to the study of classical and Renaissance

¹ The point of view is well expressed by Lieber, writing in 1853: "Our age is stamped by no characteristic more deeply than by a desire to establish and extend freedom in the political societies of mankind. . . . The first half of our century has produced several hundred political constitutions, some few of substantial and stirring worth, . . . but all of them testifying to the endeavors of our age, and plainly pointing to the high problem that must be solved."—*On Civil Liberty and Self-Government*, p. 2 (ed. 1859).

² Stephens, *Letters of John Richard Green*, p. 391.

history. Grote had his own reasons for being interested in political history; but German historians who came to the subject through art or archaeology could hardly miss the importance of other aspects of Greek or Roman society. Curtius,¹ who was associated with Brandis and Otfried Müller, was the first historian to deal adequately with the aesthetic side of Greek civilization; and it was Friedländer, a classical philologist, archaeologist, and Homeric critic, whose *Sittengeschichte*² made the empire something more than a list of good and bad emperors, and prepared the way for the later work of Marquardt³ in Germany, and the less comprehensive but excellent work of Mr. Dill⁴ and Ward Fowler⁵ in England. Burckhardt was a pupil of Kugler, and came to history through the study of art history. In 1860 he published *Die Cultur der Renaissance in Italien*, which Lord Acton pronounces "the most penetrating and subtle treatise on the history of civilization that exists in literature." It was followed, seven years later, by a second work on the same period, the *Geschichte der Renaissance in Italien*. In 1854 a lesser man than Burckhardt, Gregorovius, compounded of Goethe, Hegel, and the social ferment of 1848, was in Italy, already possessed of the idea for his history of the Roman city,⁶ which was to reveal the persistence of classical influences through the Middle Ages.

During the same period the revolutionary movement was having its effects upon the study of national history. After the collapse of the Revolution, Riehl, who had been a member of the German National Assembly, began the publication of his *Naturgeschichte*,⁷ a comprehensive and valuable study of German civiliza-

¹ *Griechische Geschichte* (3 vols.), 1857-67.

² *Darstellungen aus der Sittengeschichte Roms in der Zeit von August bis zum Ausgang der Antonine*, 1862.

³ *Römische Staatsverwaltung* (3 vols.), 1873-78; *Das Privatleben der Römer*, 1879-82.

⁴ *Roman Society in the Last Century of the Western Empire*, 1898; *Roman Society from Nero to Marcus Aurelius*, 1905.

⁵ *Social Life at Rome in the Age of Cicero*, 1909.

⁶ *Geschichte der Stadt Rom im Mittelalter*, 1859-72; English Translation in 13 vols., 1894-1900.

⁷ *Die Naturgeschichte des Volkes als Grundlage einer deutschen Social-Politik*, 1851-69.

tion. Freytag, one of the editors of the liberal journal *Die Grenzboten*, and the author of comedies and novels which celebrate the virtues of the common people, published the brilliant *Ausbilder aus der deutschen Vergangenheit* between the years 1859 and 1867. At the same time Janssen was preparing for his monumental work on the German Reformation.¹ It was in 1854 that he expressed to Böhmer his intention of studying the history of the German people in a broader way than had been done—"not to give marked preference to so-called leading state events, but to depict the German national life in all its varying conditions."² It need hardly be said that the work itself, supplemented by many others, has shown us how much more there was in the Reformation than is revealed in Banke's *Zeitalter*.

In France, the immediate effect of the failure of the Revolution was to destroy the prestige of the liberal historians: Thiers, "concealing his opinion of Napoleon in twenty volumes" in order to contrast the achievements of the Emperor with the failures of the Citizen King; Michelet, waving the mantle of Danton; Lamartine, alternately preaching Girondin republicanism and defending Robespierre against the Rolands; Louis Blanc, proving that Fraternity was destined to be the last happy state of humanity. During the Empire conservative historians turned to the eighteenth century to see if it was as bad as painted by these writers. But the good side of the Old Régime was to be found only if one left the beaten path of external political history, court intrigue, diplomacy, and wars; and its rehabilitation, begun by De Tocqueville³ and Le Play⁴ and continued later by Taine,⁵ Sorel,⁶ and many lesser men, such as Babeau,⁷ involved, therefore, much attention to social history; to the condition of agriculture and industry,

¹ Not published, however, till many years later; *Geschichte des deutschen Volkes seit dem Ausgang des Mittelalters* (8 vols.), 1878-94.

² From the preface to the 15th German edition of the *Geschichte*.

³ *L'ancien régime et la Révolution*, 1856.

⁴ *La reform sociale*, 1864.

⁵ *L'ancien régime*, 1876.

⁶ *L'Europe et la Révolution française: les mœurs politiques et les traditions*, 1885.

⁷ *Le village sous l'ancien régime*, 1878; *La ville sous l'ancien régime*, 1880; *La vie rurale dans l'ancienne France*, 1883; *Les artisans et les domestiques d'autrefois*, 1886; *Les bourgeois d'autrefois*, 1886.

popular education and religious life, the practical as well as the intellectual aspects of the humanitarian movement. The work of De Tocqueville, especially if we include the *Democracy in America*, was perhaps the most important influence, of a literary character, in directing the attention of French historians to those aspects of history which the admirers of the Revolution had neglected.

Religion, more especially, had been regarded by the earlier French historians as a negligible quantity—after the manner of Voltaire. Fustel de Coulanges, who renounced the liberal tradition in so many respects, aimed to show, in his brilliant *Cité Antique*, published in 1864, that religion, so far from being a negligible quantity, furnished the key which alone would unlock the secrets of history, at least so far as the classical world was concerned. The works of Renan,¹ who was less easily seduced by a neat hypothesis, were even more effective in revealing the intimate connection between religious belief and intellectual development, and the influence upon both of social conditions. And Taine's *History of English Literature*, published in 1863, was of similar import. Designed as an application of the author's scientific theories to the study of history, it was nevertheless far more successful in revealing the relation of literature and history than it was in propagating the philosophy which is exposed in the introduction. Indeed, the dogmatic manner in which Taine proclaimed his pseudo-scientific theories has somewhat obscured the wide and very real influence of his works. Historians repudiate his philosophy, and criticize his scholarship; but they have adopted the fundamental idea, which all his works enforce, that history is concerned, not merely with political history, but with the whole social life of nations.

And in this respect, his influence was perhaps not less in England than in France. His unblushing hostility to the Revolution, and his frank admiration for English institutions disposed Englishmen to a sympathetic interest in his works, which were in fact immediately translated. They appeared, moreover, at a time when

¹ *Vie de Jesus*, 1863; *Les apôtres*, 1866; *Saint Paul*, 1869; *Les évangiles et les seconde génération chrétienne*, 1877.

social and intellectual conditions in England were directing the attention of English historians to the social and intellectual aspects of the past—the period when public opinion was much occupied with suffrage extension; with social amelioration; with religious reform; with the bearing of scientific rationalism upon conduct and morality: Huxley was warring with bishops, bishops meddling with the higher criticism; Lecky was occupied with the history of rationalism and morals,¹ and Goldwin Smith beginning to be troubled by the riddle of existence in a way not to be suspected by those who had listened, in 1860, to his Oxford lectures; Ruskin, who had settled the question of free will at the age of ten by jumping up and down the nursery stairs, was arraigning English society in *Fors Clavigera*—the period between the publication of *Ecce Homo* and *Robert Elsmere*, when John Richard Green, so susceptible to all the influences of the time, discovered that one could not understand the history of the English bishops without understanding the whole life of the English people.

The influences which produced such works as Riehl's and Burckhardt's in Germany were without much effect upon English scholarship in the two decades after 1850; and in the seventies Green and Lecky were therefore pioneers in exploring the broader field of history. Green's friendly quarrel with Freeman over what he called "pragmatic and external history" may be followed in the correspondence. "The question between us," he says, "is a strictly historical one. It is simply whether history is to deal with only one set of facts and documents relating to a period, or with all the facts and documents it can find."² In the *Short History*, which appeared in 1874, he attempted to deal with all the facts—"to pass lightly over details of foreign wars and diplomacy, the personal adventures of kings and nobles, the pomp of courts, or the intrigue of favorites, and to dwell at length on the incidents of that constitutional, intellectual, and social advance in which we read the history of the nation itself." Three years later Lecky found it necessary, since "the history of a nation may

¹ *History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe*, 1865; *History of European Morals from Augustus to Charlemagne*, 1869.

² *Letters of John Richard Green*, p. 360.

be written in so many ways," to indicate the way in which he proposed to deal with the eighteenth century: "It has been my object to disengage from the great mass of facts those which relate to the permanent forces of the nation, or which indicate some of the more enduring forces of the national life."¹ How much the knowledge of English history has been enriched, since the days of Green and Lecky, by the study of its economic and social aspects, need not be detailed; the works of Seebohm and Maitland, of Gross and Vinogradóff, of Trevelyan, Mr. Rose, and Spencer Walpole, to mention no others, are known to everyone.

Historical scholarship in America, apart from the work of Bancroft, Motley, Prescott, and Hildreth, scarcely begins before 1870; and for a generation the influence of Ranke and Freeman was very considerable, so that the broader conception of the content of history began to make its way here later even than in England. And since the importance of intellectual and religious development has been comparatively slight, apparently at least, historians, in abandoning the purely political point of view, have limited themselves for the most part to exhibiting the influence of economic and social conditions upon political history. For this purpose, American history presented exceptional opportunities, especially in respect to the Colonial period and the period from 1815 to 1860. The result is that in the last twenty years the active study of the economic basis of the Colonial system has radically changed the interpretation of Colonial and Revolutionary history popularized by Bancroft; while the "high aerial route," by which von Holst formerly conveyed us through the middle period, has been abandoned, and innumerable students, inspired by such teachers as Turner and McMaster, are now opening a new way through the wilderness by minute and special investigations into the economic and social basis of national expansion.

After 1870, generally speaking, the main drift and tendency in Germany and France was rather toward special investigation than toward general works of a constructive character. For two decades the *Mark* controversy and the question of feudal origins was of central interest; but attention to every aspect of national

¹ *History of England in the Eighteenth Century* (1878-90), I, Preface.

history has steadily increased, especially in recent years, as religious and social problems have become more prominent. German and French historians, indeed, have abandoned the political point of view rather more completely than English or American historians—a fact which may be illustrated by referring to certain comprehensive works which have appeared during the last twenty years.

Even Treitschke, who denied that society was more than the state, described every aspect of national life when he came, in his old age, to write the history of Germany in the nineteenth century.¹ Other conservative historians, untainted by Prussian chauvinism, have naturally departed much farther from the earlier ideal. Of these, the ablest is Alfred Stern, whose monumental *Geschichte Europas*² is now appearing, six volumes, covering the period from 1815 to 1848, having been published. Based upon the most exact investigation of a wide range of sources, it deals with literature and religion, the industrial revolution, and the rise of social theories, as well as with problems of government and diplomacy; and it deals with them in no perfunctory spirit, but as altogether necessary to an understanding of the history of Europe in the nineteenth century.

At the same time the subject of *Kulturgeschichte*, so successfully studied in the earlier period by Burckhardt and Riehl, has become the predominant interest in Germany. This has been due partly to the reconstruction of early Greek history, which has been made possible by the discovery of new archaeological material and the study of anthropology and comparative religion.³ But it is due principally no doubt to the remarkable work of Lamprecht, whose *Deutsche Geschichte*⁴ led to a pamphlet war,⁵ unprecedented perhaps even in Germany. The work of Lamprecht is important from the point of view of method, as well as from the point of view of the

¹ *Deutsche Geschichte im neunzehnten Jahrhundert*, 1879-89.

² *Geschichte Europas seit den Verträgen von 1815 bis zum Frankfurter Frieden von 1871* (6 vols.), 1894-1911.

³ The most important work in this respect is Eduard Meyer's *Geschichte des Altertums* (5 vols.), 1894-1902.

⁴ *Deutsche Geschichte*, 1891-1909.

⁵ Pirenne, "Une polémique historique en Allemagne," *Revue historique*, LXIV, 50; Dow, "Features of the New History," *Am. Hist. Rev.*, III, 431.

content of history. Of Lamprecht's method, something will be said presently. Here it is only necessary to say that the *Deutsche Geschichte* assumes in the most thoroughgoing way that history has to do with every aspect of the social life of man in the past. The new school, without occupying the commanding position which the Berlin school held in the days of Droysen and Sybel, is no longer on the defensive in Germany,¹ where the publication of culture histories is now the order of the day.

In France, the establishment of the Third Republic was followed by a renewed study of the Revolution, which now receives more attention than any other phase of national history. To the Revolution, indeed, the French bring all their difficulties, hoping to find in it their original cause or their final solution. Recent religious and ecclesiastical problems have accordingly inspired, or have at least been accompanied by, many studies of the religious aspects of the Revolution, notably those of Bere,² Sicard,³ Champion,⁴ Gorce,⁵ and, more especially, Mathiez.⁶ But as the chief problems in France, as in other countries, are now economic and social, the economic and social side of the Revolution is the one which receives most attention. The comprehensive *Histoire socialiste*,⁷ written mainly by Jaurès, and written for the working men of France, but for all that one of the best histories of the Revolution yet written, is significant of the main drift and tendency. It was Jaurès indeed who suggested the appointment of the commission, appointed in fact by the minister of public instruction with Jaurès at its head, which now has in hand the publication of what will eventually be one of the most valuable collections of

¹ At present, the controversy rather centers in certain differences between different representatives of the new school. Meyer, for example, maintains against Lamprecht that the great man may be an original force in history.

² *Le clergé de France pendant la Révolution*, 1901.

³ *L'ancien clergé de France* (2 vols.).

⁴ *La séparation de l'Eglise et de l'État en 1794*, 1903.

⁵ *Histoire religieuse de la Révolution française*, 1909.

⁶ *Les origines des cultes révolutionnaire*, 1904; *La Théophilanthropie et le culte décadaire*, 1904; *Rome et le clergé français sous la Constituante*, 1911; *Les conséquences religieuses de la journée du 10 août, 1792*, 1911.

⁷ No date. First volume appeared in 1901.

documents for French history; a collection, that is to say, which is designed to furnish the completest understanding possible of the economic and social conditions of France at the opening of the Revolution, and of the changes that were effected between 1789 and 1800. Happily, the commission is not composed of politicians, or the editing intrusted to the "Chef du bureau des proces-verbaux" and the "Bibliothécaire-adjoint de la Chambre des Députés." That the commission is composed of some of the ablest and most prominent French historians is an indication of their interest in social and economic history.¹

But the attitude which French historians are coming to take toward the content of history may be best indicated perhaps by referring to certain general histories published during the last twenty years. To this task they have not, indeed, brought the method of Lamprecht; they have not written culture histories, but they have written histories of civilization; the latter being, nevertheless, very much like the former with the theory omitted. One of the works I have in mind is the *Historie générale*, of which the first volume appeared in 1893. In the preface to this volume, the editors, Lavissee and Rambaud, acknowledge their obligation to Duruy, who, as early as 1863, asserted that "l'histoire-bataille n'est pas tout," and announce their intention to place "au premier rang les faits qui intéressent, comme disait Voltaire, 'les mœurs et l'esprit des nations.'" This ideal was undoubtedly more difficult to attain in a history of Europe than in a history of some particular country, such as France; and has in fact been attained much better in M. Rambaud's brief *Histoire de la civilisation française*, and in the more comprehensive *Histoire de France*,² recently completed under the editorship of M. Lavissee. In these works the whole history of France is divided into certain distinct periods, each possessing a certain unity in itself; at least each period is treated on that assumption; treated, therefore, descriptively,

¹ *Collection de documents inédits sur l'histoire économique de la Révolution française, publié par le Ministère de l'Instruction publique.* The commission, which was appointed in 1903, includes such well-known historians as Aulard, Lavissee, Levasseur, Sagnac, Bloch, and Esmein. The publication of the *cahiers*, and of documents having to do with the acquisition and sale of the national lands, is being actively prosecuted.

² 9 vols., 1905-10.

from the point of view of its political, intellectual, religious, aesthetic, economic, and social characteristics. The aim has been, "not to relate how the battle of Bouvines was won or that of Poitiers lost, but to sketch the history of the nation itself, in all its elements: to show how our ancestors lived, and by what activities [*labeurs*] they prepared the happier life which we enjoy"—to write, that is to say, "the history of French civilization."¹

To exhibit the growth of civilization, to trace the evolution of society—most historians today would probably agree that the ultimate aim of history is to do something of that sort. But it is doubtless true that historians, for the most part, have not defined very precisely the meaning of the term "society," or of the term "evolution" as applied to society. Certainly many difficulties lie hidden in this harmless looking phrase "evolution of society," difficulties which recent attempts to write comprehensive histories, such as those just mentioned, are beginning to reveal. What some of these difficulties are may be suggested by pointing out the influences which, since the middle of the last century, have transformed the earlier conception of history in respect to synthesis and interpretation.

III

That history became "scientific" in the third quarter of the nineteenth century was probably due as much to the influence of Ranke as to the influence of natural science. Ranke set forth his method of dealing with the sources in 1824.² His merit was straightway recognized by the Prussian government, but for some years his influence was confined mainly to his pupils, of whom Giesebrecht and Waitz were the most famous. Even in Germany his works were severely handled on all sides; he was too conservative to satisfy the liberals, while Droysen classed him with the romantics. Nevertheless, his history of the popes³ gave him an international reputation, and the *Zeitalter der Reformation*⁴ became

¹ Rambaud, *Histoire de la civilisation française*, I, Preface.

² *Zur Kritik neuerer Geschichtschreiber*, 1824.

³ *Die römischen Päpste, ihre Kirche und ihr Staat im 16ten und 17ten Jahrhundert*.

⁴ *Deutsche Geschichte im Zeitalter der Reformation* (6 vols.), 1839-49.

a German classic. Whatever might be thought of his interpretation, the value of his critical methods could not be denied, and before the middle of the century they became the basis of the exact and laborious scholarship of the most famous school of German historians.

The influence of German scholarship was felt in England from the time of Coleridge and Carlyle, who revealed to Englishmen the value of a language, the existence of which Dr. Johnson might have denied, and which Gibbon could not use and did not need to. In 1830 Niebuhr was enthroned at Oxford, where he remained till replaced by Mommsen twenty years later.¹ Ranke's *Popes* was translated into English and given the prestige of a review by Macaulay.² The admiration of mid-century Germans for English institutions found its complement in English appreciation for German scholarship and in loyalty to the German *Mark*. In the fifties, Lord Acton was laying the foundation, at Munich and Berlin, for his immense learning; Bishop Stubbs was preparing to apply the methods of Waitz to the study of the English constitution; and in 1860 Freeman retired to Somerleaze, there to instruct his countrymen in the great dogmas of unity and continuity, and to assure them, at some length, that in Germany Froude would scarcely be considered a historian, or Kingsley have been made a professor. About the same time, the first American pilgrims were coming home to establish seminars in the spirit of the master.

In France, the influence of German historical methods was slight until the collapse of the Revolution of 1848 drove the radicals to cover and exposed the vain prophesies of the liberal historians. Of those who had pinned their faith to the Revolution, many turned from it in fear or disgust, because, like Quinet, they felt that it had betrayed their hopes, or because, like Lamartine, they had seen the shade of Robespierre in the streets of Paris. The lyric note had already ceased in France when the siege of Paris proved past dispute that exact and critical scholarship, even when employed in the chauvinistic spirit of the later Berlin school, had

¹ Cf. Freeman, *Historical Essays*, 2d series, p. 318.

² *The Ecclesiastical and Political History of the Popes of Rome during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*. Translated by Sarah Austin. 3 vols. 1840. Macaulay's review appeared in October of the same year, *Edinburgh Review*, LXXII, 227.

surprised more of history's secret than the genius of Michelet. And already French scholars were crossing the Rhine to learn German methods. It was in 1867, when Duruy was reorganizing the schools of France, that the young Gabriel Monod, returning from Göttingen and Berlin, set himself to inspire two generations of French students with the ideals which Ranke had bequeathed to Giesebrecht and Waitz.

But undoubtedly the critical methods of Ranke would have less easily conquered the world of historians, had it not been for the rising influence of natural science. The work of Malthus, which acquired peculiar significance toward the middle of the century, the work of Comte, Quetelet, Buckle, and Marx, the work of Spencer and Darwin, all seemed to point to a positive and materialistic explanation of man and society. The possibility of a "science of history" was accordingly a much-mooted question about 1860; and historians found themselves between the devil and the sea: must they acknowledge themselves mere literary people, hoping for nothing better than to elevate history to the dignity of romance; or, renouncing their former ways, become sociologists in good earnest and set themselves, after the manner of Buckle, the task of reducing history to the rank of a science? They chose to do neither. Droysen¹ and Lord Acton,² Goldwin Smith,³ even Charles Kingsley⁴ in his way, undertook to refute the "science" of Comte and Buckle; and the first two were generally thought, by historians at least, to have succeeded. In this controversy it was Ranke, a most acceptable alternative to Buckle, who taught historians how to be scientific without ceasing to be historical.

Nevertheless, "scientific history," which became the watchword of historians from this time on, implied something more than the adoption of Ranke's critical methods of research; it implied

¹ Droysen's criticism of Buckle appeared originally in the *Historische Zeitschrift*, 1862. Translated by E. B. Andrews, and included with his translation of the *Grundriss der Historik* in *Outline of the Principles of History*, 1893.

² Two articles published in *The Rambler*, 1858; reprinted in *Historical Essays and Studies*, 1907.

³ One of his Oxford lectures delivered in 1859-61, *On the Study of History*, p. 45.

⁴ *The Limits of Exact Science as Applied to History*, 1864.

a particular point of view in respect to interpretation as well, a point of view which was not precisely that of Ranke. To be scientific was to assume, in respect to historical events, the objective and detached attitude of mind with which the scientist regarded natural phenomena. "The historian," said Taine, "may be permitted the privilege of the naturalist: I have observed my subject as one might observe the metamorphosis of an insect."¹ Doubtless many historians, like Taine himself, were more thoroughgoing in theory than in practice; but all agreed that the first duty was to avoid the warping effects of religious or party bias, the insidious influence of temperamental prepossessions, the alluring temptation to read into the facts any meaning suggested by a preconceived theory.

Undoubtedly Ranke's ideal of impartiality was a high one, and his freedom from religious and political bias sufficiently complete; but the "scientific historian" could no longer adhere, in the interpretation of history, to his favorite doctrine of ideas. Apart from any scientific theories about man, it was difficult, indeed, considering the marked success of Machiavellian politics in this period, not to think that Providence favored big battalions rather than ideas. An interpretation of history, on the biological analogy, as a conflict of forces in which the strongest prevailed, was therefore well suited to explain the fall of Louis Napoleon, or to justify the success of Bismarck and Cavour. Perhaps industrial exploitation and Machiavellian politics were after all only the natural and necessary results of the struggle for existence, leading to the survival of the fittest, the policy of "blood and iron" as beneficent in the end as the methods of Nature "red in tooth and claw."

It was not indeed difficult for historians to adapt themselves to this point of view. The earlier conception was sufficiently fatalistic, and it needed only to put Nature in the place of God, to transform ideas into force, and the change was complete. Doubtless the germ of the later theory is in Savigny; and we are told that Droysen learned from Hegel how to justify success, and that Marx founded his materialistic interpretation upon a dialectic borrowed from the same high authority. Giesebrecht's attitude

¹ *L'ancien régime* (1876), Preface.

of aloofness implied that whatever got itself well established was doubtless right as long as it prevailed; and if you conceive of Carlyle's great man as the product of Nature instead of the agent of God, his philosophy is, what it was so often said to be, the assertion that might makes right, for it justifies equally Cromwell and Charles II, Henry IV in proclaiming the Edict of Nantes and Louis XIV in revoking it.

However that may be, scientific history, renouncing philosophy altogether, aimed to free itself from the taint of teleological explanation, and set about studying the past "as something worth knowing for itself and the truth's sake."¹ And to do this it was above all necessary to eliminate the present, its needs and desires, its passions, its hopes and fears—"Histories should be prepared with as much supreme indifference as if they were written in another planet," according to Renan.² Previous historians had not done this. They had studied the past from the point of view of the present, and on that rock they had split—"The way in which Macaulay and Forster regarded the past—that is to say, the constant avowed or unavowed comparison of it with the present—is altogether destructive of real historical knowledge," according to Samuel Rawson Gardiner.³

But after all, why study the dead past for its own sake? Precisely for the sake of the present! And this paradox concealed an initial prepossession and a philosophy. To study the past for its own sake, without prepossessions, was itself a prepossession. A splendid hypothesis, "avowed or unavowed," inspired confidence in the value of the fact for the truth's sake. This hypothesis was implicit in the doctrine of continuity. The doctrine of continuity was not new; but it had formerly been conceived mainly as the progressive realization of certain ideas; whereas scientific history, banishing ideas as a motive force, and concerning itself with the "fact," sought for the continuity of history in external action, and conceived of the present as the product of the past in the sense of being the last event in a connected series of events. History, thought of as a kind of objective reality, seemed a wonder-

¹ Stubbs, *Lectures on Mediaeval and Modern History*, p. 26.

² *The Apostles* (Trans. 1880), p. 44.

³ *History of England* (1884), Preface.

fully solid, almost material, thing; something needing only to be "reconstructed" to stand visible: much as if the facts of history were a number of blocks which had fallen down; which might be set up again; and which, once set them up in the order, precisely, in which they had originally stood, would spell out an intelligible word. Let the historian set up the blocks! Strictly speaking, it was not for him to interpret, but to reveal. "It is not I who speak, but history which speaks through me," was Fustel's reproof to applauding students. And again: "Il se peut sans doute qu'une certaine philosophie se dégage de cette histoire scientifique, mais il faut qu'elle dégage naturellement, d'elle même, presque en dehors de la volonté de l'historien"¹—a splendid theory, doubtless naïve in the extreme, and impossible to be applied by any one, certainly not by Fustel de Coulanges; but amounting, in practice, to this, that everything which got itself established was judged to be necessary where it existed and so long as it lasted; so that the importance of a fact would be measured, speaking from the point of view of an ideal reconstruction, in terms of its extension in time and space. If, for example, certain facts, which for convenience we call the Catholic church, persisted throughout western Europe for several centuries, exerting an influence in some proportion to their extension and persistence, it must have been because they were adapted to the conditions there and during that period; they must have been fittest to survive; the reason for supposing that they were fittest to survive, and adapted to the conditions, being precisely the fact that they did persist throughout western Europe for several centuries. The presumption would of course be "in favor of the church against the sects because the sects came to unspeakable grief, and in favor of the Reformation against Rome because the reformers were successful." "I consider," said Albert Sorel, "that my work will not have been useless if I can achieve this result: to show that the French Revolution, which appeared to many as the subversion, and to others as the regeneration of the old European world, was the natural and necessary result of the history of Europe."²

¹ Quoted in *English Historical Review*, V, 1.

² *L'Europe et la Révolution française*, I, 8.

This attitude of objectivity—the thoroughgoing renunciation of the present, the disposition to reconstruct the past as a whole, to know it for itself alone, to “justify that which is just by the judgment of experience”—undoubtedly this attitude was well suited to the spirit of the two decades after 1870. The resplendent vision of Perfectibility, vouchsafed to the generous minds of the eighteenth century, was much dimmed after 1815, and again after 1848. In the sixties, the evolutionary philosophy fell like a cold douche upon the belief in progress through conscious effort. The theory that man is one with Nature was an old one, but the work of Darwin seemed to furnish a positive demonstration of theories which had hitherto rested on a purely speculative foundation. The biological law of evolution, especially as applied to society by Spencer, indicated that progress, if there was such a thing, could come only through the operation of mechanical forces. Man himself, at best hardly more than a speck of sentient dust, a chance deposit on the surface of the world, might observe the laws of development, but could neither modify nor control them. Materialism had its day in science, pessimism in philosophy, naturalism in literature; religion seemed a spent force. When all the old foundations were crumbling, historians held firmly to the belief that facts at least could not be denied; and in these days of acrid controversy, the past, studied for itself, as a record of facts which undoubtedly happened, was a kind of neutral ground, an excellent refuge for those who wished to sit tight and let the event decide.

But the mood of those years is definitely passing. During the last two decades there has been a revival of faith in the possibility of social regeneration, a revival, one might almost say, of the optimistic spirit of the eighteenth century. Out of the wreck of old creeds, there is arising a new faith, born of science and democracy, almost the only vital conviction left to us—the profound belief, namely, in progress; the belief that society can, by taking thought, modify the conditions of life, and thereby indefinitely improve the happiness and welfare of all men. As this faith strengthens, it finds expression in the imperative command that

knowledge shall serve purpose, and learning be applied to the solution of the "problem of human life." And so there comes, ever more insistently, this question: What light does the past throw on the present and the future? The answer to this question is what our age demands of the social sciences.

And to this question the social sciences are giving heed. Long ago Ihering broke with the Savigny tradition, and conceived of jurisprudence as a science of rights as well as a knowledge of law. Sociologists have emancipated themselves from Spencerian fatalism. Economics, having turned from theory to history, is returning, in some measure, to theory; but to a theory immensely enriched, flavored with ethics. In a recent book, I find the "new economics" defined as the science of human welfare rather than as the science of wealth. Philosophy, which natural science, in the heyday and flush of its tawdry intolerance, so carefully interred forty years ago, has come to life again; and its first conscious act has been to announce, in metaphysical and poetical form, a definition of time which frees the will from deterministic shackles, and a conception of history which liberates the present from slavish dependence on the past.

The study of history is bound to be, and has been already, influenced by this new faith in progress and the possibility of social regeneration. It is becoming clear that the past, regarded as an objective reality, is an abstraction; that the facts, simply restored to their original position, convey no intelligible meaning; that it profits us little to know that the present is what it is because the past was what it was. And so historians are coming, very slowly indeed, but certainly, to regard the past in a new way, or perhaps in an old way. It cannot indeed be said that they are growing either metaphysical or poetical in their conception of the past; but in the statement of Professor Robinson that the time has come when the present should "turn on the past and exploit it in the interest of advance," I see only a more militant assertion of Maeterlinck's idea that "past events do not control us except in so far as we have renounced our right to control them. Perhaps not many historians would subscribe to Professor Robinson's confession of faith; but many are ready to welcome new methods of

interpretation which promise to bring our knowledge of the past to bear more directly and more effectively on the present than the prevailing method has been able to do.

Now, if purpose is to direct knowledge, we must be aware of purpose. If we are to control events and not be controlled by them, it is first of all necessary to know to what end we would control them. If we are to exploit the past in the interest of advance, we need to know what is advance. And this means that the importance of the fact can no longer be measured by the fact itself; it must, on the contrary, be judged by some standard of value derived from a conception of what it is that constitutes social progress—some tentative hypothesis, or conception of moral quality, or present practical purpose. Let us see, then, if it is possible to find, in recent historical works, or in the expression of opinion by historians, any disposition to set up such standards for purposes of interpretation.

"History, in the higher sense of the word," says Mr. Chamberlain, "means only that past which still lives actively in the consciousness of man and helps to mold him." And in his *Foundations of the Nineteenth Century* he has attempted to give, "not a history of the past, but merely of that past which is still living,"¹ Whatever historians may think of Mr. Chamberlain's performance, it cannot be denied that many are disposed to sympathize with his ideal; a disposition which finds practical expression in the tendency to emphasize only or principally those aspects of the past which have an obvious connection with the present, to deal more fully with the recent past than with the remote past, or to seek in the remote past situations analogous to those of the present. The latter method of interpretation, which is only a kind of recrudescence of the old theory of cycles, has been made much of by Ferrero.²

¹ *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 1899; English translation by John Lees, 1911.

² "I hope that my book has enabled me to demonstrate that the Roman world conquest, . . . was in reality the effect, remarkable, indeed, for its special conditions of time and place, of an internal transformation which is continually being re-enacted in the history of societies on a larger or a smaller scale, promoted by the same causes and with the same resultant confusion and suffering—the growth of a nationalist and industrial democracy on the ruins of a federation of agricultural aristocracies."—*The Greatness and Decline of Rome*, I, Preface.

A more direct method of bringing our knowledge of the past to bear on the present is represented by the recent work of Mr. Firth on *The House of Lords during the Civil War*, which appeared two years ago when the conflict between the Commons and the Lords was at its height. The bearing of the work on that controversy is obvious; but the author did not press the analogy, and it was only in its timeliness that the book departed from accepted principles of interpretation.

The case is somewhat different with many recent textbooks in mediaeval and modern history which consciously devote far more space to the recent past than to earlier periods, and in their treatment of the earlier periods neglect those movements which seem to us dead issues, however important they may have seemed to the people who were engaged in them. "In preparing the volume in hand," it is stated in the preface to Robinson and Beard's *Development of Modern Europe*, "the writers have consistently subordinated the past to the present. It has been their ever-conscious aim to enable the reader to catch up with his own times; to read intelligently the foreign news in the morning paper; to know what was the attitude of Leo XIII toward the Social Democrats even if he has forgotten that of Innocent III toward the Albigenses." It is true, as the authors maintain, that this does not involve any "distortion of the facts in order to bring them into relation to any particular conception of the present or its tendencies." Yet it quite clearly implies that the standard for judging the importance of historical facts is the present and its tendencies. Consistently applied, it is a method of interpretation which renounces the attempt to "reconstruct" the past as a whole for its own sake. Conceiving that the past is to be studied, not for itself, but for the present, it assumes that certain events, such, for example, as the Russian campaign, may have had immense importance for understanding the time in which they occurred but are dead for us and for the present, while other events, such as the invention of the steam engine, may have had little importance for understanding the time when they occurred, but have immense importance for us; and assuming this, it asserts that the historian, in telling the story of the past, may legitimately emphasize the

facts according to their importance for our time instead of their own—may legitimately, that is to say, interpret the past in terms of the present.

Two years ago, in an address before the American Historical Association, Professor Turner formulated this conception of the purpose of historical study much better than I can do. He said:

In the observation of present conditions, we may find assistance in our study of the past. By the revelation of the present, what seemed to be side eddies have not seldom proven to be the concealed entrances to the main current; and the course which seemed the central one has led to blind channels and stagnant waters, important in their day, but cut off like ox-bow lakes from the mighty river of historical progress. . . . [And therefore] it is important to study the present and the recent past . . . as the source of new hypotheses, new criteria of the perspective of the remoter past. A just public opinion and a statesmanlike treatment of present problems demand that they be seen in their historical relations in order that history may hold the lamp for conservative reform.¹

How remote is all this from the attitude of Gardiner—"The avowed or unavowed comparison of the past with the present is altogether destructive of real historical knowledge."

A quite different method of estimating the importance of historical facts is to bring them to the test of some conception of moral quality. The historian who claims the privilege of the naturalist cannot be concerned, strictly speaking, with the quality of actions or events. He may find of course that an action acquires special importance because those whom it concerned attributed to it a certain quality, and were influenced by it accordingly. But for the historian who observes his subject only "as one might observe the metamorphosis of an insect," the circumstance that the men whom he studies judged actions by their quality is itself only another fact to be observed and recorded; he judges none of these facts by their quality, as good or bad, harmful or beneficial, as contributing to progress or making for retrogression. So far as he is concerned, the facts of history have no ethical significance, no qualitative value.

Precisely the opposite of this was maintained by David J. Hill four years ago, before the Congress of Historical Sciences at Berlin,

¹ "Social Forces in American History," *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XVI, 217.

in an address entitled "The Ethical Function of the Historian."¹ "The substance with which the history of man is concerned," he said, "is personal conduct, and the reaction of personal conduct upon human development." The function of the historian is, therefore, an "ethical function." Not, to be sure, that the historian should set himself up "as a moral judge"; but "the interest of history does not lie in the fact that so many painters and sculptors lived in a certain period of time and produced so many works, but in the quality of the pictures and statues they created; not in the fact that so many soldiers fought in so many battles and succeeded in killing so many of their number, but in the social purpose for which they fought and the effect of their victory upon human happiness." According to this view of the matter, the historian judges the importance of the fact, not by its extension, but by its quality; and not by the contemporary estimate of its quality, but by his own estimate; he "*explains* the action of a man," as Lord Acton says, "by the standards of the age in which he lived but *judges* it by those of his own." And this, obviously, implies a standard of value not furnished by the facts themselves. The historian must rouse up a brave philosophy of life before venturing to say what was the effect of the battle of Waterloo upon human happiness; he must provide himself with aesthetic canons if he is to estimate the quality of *Mona Lisa* or the *Sistine Madonna*—a difficult business, certainly, for Renan's supremely indifferent man, sitting calmly in Mars, or in the moon.

Perhaps Mr. Hill is not a representative historian. But let me quote, as an illustration of the disposition to interpret history according to the quality of its facts, the following from the preface of a recent book on the Middle Ages.² The historian's sympathy, says Mr. Taylor,

cannot but reach out to those who lived up to their best understanding of life; for who can do more? Yet woe unto that man whose mind is closed, whose standards are material and base. Not only [thus saith the historian to those who make history] shalt thou do what seems well to thee; but thou shalt do right with wisdom. Thou shalt not only be sincere, but thou shalt

¹ *Am. Hist. Rev.*, XIV, 9.

² *The Mediaeval Mind* (1911), Preface.

be righteous, and not iniquitous; beneficent and not malignant; loving and lovable, and not hating and hateful. Thou shalt be a promoter of light and not of darkness; an illuminator and not an obscurer. Not only shalt thou seek to choose aright, but at thy peril thou shalt so choose. . . . And so at *his* peril likewise, must the historian judge. He cannot state the facts and sit aloof, impartial between good and ill, between success and failure, progress and retrogression, the soul's health and loveliness, and spiritual foulness and disease. He must love and hate, and at his peril love aright and hate what is truly hateful.

This is clearly a new note. It might have pleased Lord Acton; but it would assuredly have sounded like sweet bells jangled, out of tune, and harsh, to Ranke, Samuel Rawson Gardiner, or Henry C. Lea. Yet it is the quite deliberate opinion of a professed historian, trained in all the excellent technique of his trade, and the author of books which few historians would deny to be scholarly in every sense of the term.

These are direct and practical methods of bringing our knowledge of the past to bear on the solution of present problems; they are not, however, altogether new methods; and certainly they are somewhat empirical methods, useful rather for dealing with particular aspects of history than with the whole of it. The uncompromisingly philosophic mind, resolutely seeking a complete historical synthesis, requires a more scientific method, and a more inclusive one. Such a method has been discovered in Germany—the method of Lamprecht; a method which I understand to aim at a complete synthesis, omitting nothing; and one which seeks to explain in a new manner, and in a severely scientific manner, exactly how the present is the product of the past. Of Lamprecht's method, I confess to speak with the greatest misgiving, for I am not at all sure that I understand it. But at least it is an attempt to solve the difficult problem of synthesis. One may therefore approach it from that point of view.

The growing interest, among historians, in synthetic problems is, indeed, a notable characteristic of the last two decades. During that period many constructive works, either by individuals or by associated scholars, have been begun or brought to completion. The *Revue de synthèse historique* was established in France in 1900.

Rickert,¹ Xenopol,² Berr,³ and many others have concerned themselves with the theory and the logic of historical synthesis.⁴ And it is significant that most of the historians who spoke before the Congress of Arts and Science at St. Louis took occasion to urge the necessity of giving more attention to constructive work, and to interpretation. They seemed also to agree, although differing in many other respects, that the ultimate purpose of the historical synthesis is to exhibit the development of society, or of national life, as a whole, to the end that the present organization of society may be better understood.

Now, one result of recent attempts at constructive work has been to reveal the difficulty of doing just what historians profess to be their ultimate task—the task, that is to say, of exhibiting the evolution of national life, or of society, as a whole. Such works, for example, as the *Histoire générale*,⁵ the *American Nation*,⁶ and Professor Channing's *History of the United States*⁷ aim to deal with all aspects of the national life. But the truth is that these works, excellent as they undoubtedly are, are after all mainly political histories, with a good deal of attention throughout to the influence of economic conditions, and with chapters sandwiched in here and there dealing with literature and other odd ends. Except for the prefaces, one could not easily distinguish them

¹ *Die Grenzen der naturwissenschaftlichen Begriffsbildung*, 1896–1902.

² *Les principes fondamentaux de l'histoire*, 1899.

³ *La synthèse en histoire: essai critique et théorique*, 1911. This is rather a review of recent discussion than a contribution to theory.

⁴ For an excellent brief summary of Rickert, with mention of many other works, see Fling, "Historical Synthesis," *Am. Hist. Rev.*, IX (October, 1903), 1.

⁵ "Nous nous garderons de faire entrer uniquement ou principalement ce que notre respecté maître, M. Duruy, appelait l'histoire-bataille: litanies de souverains, séries de combats ou de traités. Nous entendons mettre au premier rang les faits qui intéressent, comme disait Voltaire, 'les mœurs et l'esprit des nations'."—*Histoire Générale*, I, Preface.

⁶ "Not intended to be simply a political or constitutional history: it must include the social life of the people, their religion, their literature, and their schools. It must include their economic life, occupations, labor systems, and organization of Capital."—*American Nation*, I, editor's introduction to the series.

⁷ "The growth of the nation will be treated as one continuous development from the political, military, institutional, industrial, and social points of view."—*History of the United States*, I, Preface.

from histories which frankly profess to be political histories, such as Hunt and Poole's *Political History of England*,¹ or those which have taken to themselves unique titles, such as the *Cambridge Modern History*.

Nor is the difficulty due altogether to predilection for political history, or to ignorance of other things. For the problem is not solved by works which give as much space to social and intellectual conditions as they do to political conditions, such as Rambaud's *Histoire de la civilisation française*, or the *Histoire de France* of M. Lavisse. The problem is to exhibit at once the interaction of all the complex forces which make the nation what it is at any given time, and the process of change by which these forces, acting together, are transforming the nation. But the interaction of political, economic, religious, and intellectual conditions at any given time is not necessarily revealed by simply describing them in turn; and if, as in these works, the whole subject is divided into certain distinct periods, and each period is treated statistically, as it were, the process of growth or evolution is largely lost sight of. These works do not, therefore, trace the evolution of the French civilization or of the French nation. At best, they give us excellent descriptions of various aspects of national life in successive periods.

There is a most suggestive phrase in a letter to Freeman from Green, who was fully aware of this difficulty. He insists that he must deal with the "moral and intellectual facts" as well as with political facts. "And I must deal with them," he says, "much as I have dealt with them in Little Book; that is, I can't muddle them up in corners always."² To deal with moral and intellectual facts as well as with political facts was easy enough if one "muddled them up in corners"; but how to fuse them all together in one continuous narrative, revealing at every stage the unity and the

¹ "As the title imports, this history will deal primarily with politics, . . . but as the history of a nation is complex, and its condition at any given time cannot be understood without taking into account the various forces acting upon it, notices of religious matters, and of intellectual, social, and economic progress will also find place in these volumes."—*Political History of England*, I, Preface.

² *Letters of John Richard Green*, p. 304. "Little Book" was Green's phrase for designating the Short History.

continuity of national life—that was Green's problem. With a wide knowledge of details, possessed of a constructive imagination denied to most men, employing a literary style which even in description always conveys a sense of movement, he solved the problem as well perhaps as it is likely to be solved by anyone who attempts to synthesize the facts of history in terms of their concrete relations.

For in truth this problem raises the question whether a synthesis of facts according to their concrete relations is altogether adequate if the business of the historian is to trace the evolution of society as a whole, or of distinct social groups, such as nations. If society, or a nation, is something more than its external manifestations, an adequate description of it must seek to relate those manifestations which, in their concrete setting, seem to have no connection with each other. It is possible, for example, that there is some underlying connection between the painting by Whistler of Carlyle's portrait and the introduction into Parliament of Gladstone's second Home Rule bill. But the connection, whatever it may be, is not external, and probably no amount of investigation, however accurate, of what actually happened, or any juxtaposition, however ingenious, of concrete descriptions of those events, will reveal it. The connection, if there be one, is not found in the documents. It may, however, be found, hypothetically at least, in the subjective basis of these events; and so the attempt to deal with all the complex activities of men in society, to exhibit at once their interaction and their evolution, leads naturally enough to the search for some ideal connection of the facts—to a method of synthesis which, without necessarily ignoring altogether their actual position in time and space, groups them fundamentally according to common qualities.

And this, to return to the method of Lamprecht, is what I suppose to be the significance of the *Deutsche Geschichte*, which has created such a stir in Germany. Lamprecht took his cue, I believe, from Burckhardt, and I understand that, like Burckhardt, he has attempted to disengage the soul of society, the *social-psyche* from the concrete events, the particular activities of men, in any given period; and this he does by discussing the concrete events,

the particular activities, as results of the psychological forces which are generated by social life: thus he finds, in the *social-psyche*, the underlying connection between the crude delineation of an eagle, the construction of a heroic song, and the Donation of Charlemagne. But Lamprecht goes farther than Burckhardt, for while Burckhardt limited himself to a single period, and was concerned, therefore, only with one problem, the problem of correlating the facts of a single period, Lamprecht surveys the whole of German history and is confronted with the further problem of explaining how the *mass-psyche* of one period is transformed into the *mass-psyche* of the next one: he seeks, that is to say, to exhibit the evolution of the social soul by discovering the "fundamental underlying psychic mechanism" which conditions it.

Those who are interested in guarding frontiers may determine whether Lamprecht is historian or sociologist. It is worth while noting, however, that he did not, like Ferrero, come to the study of history as a psychologist, but that, starting as a historian, it was the purely historical problem of synthesis and interpretation that led him to apply the principles of psychology to history. The success of the method obviously depends very largely upon psychology; it is for psychology to say whether there is a soul of society, to define the concept with as much precision as possible, to determine the process by which it operates, and to formulate methods for detecting and measuring its influence. Assuming that this can be done, it is clear that the method of Lamprecht furnishes at least one solution of the problem I have mentioned—the problem of dealing with society as a whole, of exhibiting at once the unity and the evolution of its varied manifestations.

But in doing this, it does something more; it erects a standard for determining the importance of past events which enables us to bring the past to bear on the present in a new way altogether. By interpreting the series of objective events in terms of psychic development, the present ceases to be the product of the past in the sense of being the last event in a time series of events, and becomes the product of the past in the sense that the actions of men now living are the results of past social experience psychologically transformed. The English Parliament, to take an

example, is, we say, the product of the past; and we try to show this by tracing its continuity in successive external acts from the thirteenth century down. But after all, Lamprecht might say, the English Parliament is an abstraction, and the continuity of the institution, in any external sense, a mere figure of speech. In what sense, then, is it the product of the past? Why, only in the sense that the social experience of the English people, gathered up, as it were, though the course of their history, and cumulatively transmitted from generation to generation, is now effectively producing those psychic reactions which impel Englishmen to act as they do act, at Westminster or elsewhere—impelling Gladstone to introduce a second Home Rule bill, and Whistler to paint the portrait of Carlyle. The continuity of history is thus subjective. Its real substance is social experience deposited in nerve centers. Civilization is understood not as action but as motive to action, and progress is measured by the growing intensity of psychic responses.

In connection with the method of Lamprecht, it is interesting to recall the earlier ideas of Fustel de Coulanges, and notably certain sentences in the preface of the *Cité antique*. "Happily, the past never dies completely for men. Man may forget it, but he keeps it with him always. For, such as he himself is in each epoch, he is the product and *résumé* of all anterior epochs. If he descends into his own soul, he can rediscover there these different epochs, and distinguish them according to the impress which each has made on him." Fustel seems here to have anticipated the fundamental idea of Lamprecht—an idea, however, which he afterward repudiated absolutely.

IV

These are, as it seems to me, some of the ways in which social problems and ideas are influencing the study and writing of history. I am not concerned to pronounce upon the legitimacy of any of the new methods, or to estimate the measure of success with which they have been applied. It is worth noting, however, that they are likely to be much used in the future. Differing in many respects, they seem all inspired by a common motive, the desire,

namely, to appropriate out of the past something which may serve that ideal of social progress which is the sum and substance of our modern faith; and in this respect they are part of the central intellectual movement of the age, of which the most striking feature, perhaps, is the reaction against scientific materialism. It is the philosophers, indeed, rather than the historians, who have popularized the new conception of the past. The past, according to Rudolph Eucken, is not a burden on the present but a power within it—which I understand to mean that knowledge of history is useless except in so far as we can transmute it into motives for effective social service. Maeterlinck has expressed the same idea much better:¹ “Our chief concern with the past is not what we have done or the adventures we have met with, but the moral reactions bygone events are producing within us at this very moment.” The *Deutsche Geschichte* might be considered as an exposition of this thesis.

Perhaps it is the *social-psyche* that induces historians, against their will doubtless, to approach within hailing-distance of philosophers. At all events, if it be true that the boundaries which have hitherto set history off from philosophy and the social sciences are being effaced, I think we may regard it as a fortunate circumstance, an indication that historical studies are not destined to run into a barren scholasticism, a most happy augury, therefore, of their future usefulness.

¹ *The Buried Temple*, p. 245.